

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-17

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-09 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6500

INFO USCINCSO

AMCONSUL CALI

AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

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E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: PINS, CO

SUBJECT: CRIME WAVE AND PRESS ROUNDUP OF SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

1. SUMMARY: SINCE MID- FEBRUARY/ COLOMBIAN BANKS AND SAVINGS INSTITUTIONS HAVE SUFFERED COSTLY ATTACKS APPARENTLY BY COMMON CRIMINALS. GUERRILLA ACTIVITIES HAVE CONTINUED AT A RELATIVELY LOW LEVEL WITH THE EXCEPTION OF ONE MAJOR ACTION BY THE REVOLUTIONARY ARMED FORCES OF COLOMBIA (FARC). THE NATIONAL BANKING ASSOCIATION HAS REACTED TO THE WAVE OF BANK ROBBERIES BY INCREASING SECURITY MEASURES. ANOTHER KIDNAPPING WAS REPORTED IN ANTIOQUIA. END SUMMARY.

2. THE WAVE OF BANK ROBBERIES WHICH BEGAN ON FEB 14, WITH A RAID ON THE BANCO POPULAR IN SANTA MARTA, MAGDALENA INCLUDED ATTACKS ON THE FOLLOWING BANKS: FEB 14, STA. MARTA, MAGDALENA, BANCO POPULAR, PESOS 1/2 MILLION; FEB 20, MEDELLIN, ANTIOQUIA, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CAJA DE AHORROS, PESOS 220,000; FEB 23, BARRANQUILLA, ATLANTICO, EXCHANGE OFFICE, PESOS 1/2 MILLION; FEBRUARY 27, BOGOTA, BANCO DE BOGOTA, PESOS 500,000; FEBRUARY 28, BOGOTA, BANCO GANADERO, PESOS 94,000; MAR 1, MEDELLIN, ANTIOQUIA, BANCO DE COLOMBIA PESOS 93,000; MARCH5, BOGOTA, BANCO DE COLOMBIA, PESOS 163,446. OTHER CRIMES WHICH ACHIEVED SOME NOTARIETY DURING THIS PERIOD INCLUDED THE HOLD- UP OF A BUS ON THE WASY FROM BOGOTA TO VILLA VICENCIO AND THE ATTACK ON A GOVT TAX OFFICE IN QUINDIO.

3. AS A REACTION AGAINST THIS WAVE OF BANK ROBBERIES/, THE NATIONAL BANKING ASSOCIATION OF COLOMBIA PRESENTED PLANS TO COMBAT THE THREAT TO COLOMBIAN BANKS TO THE NATIONAL GOVT ON MAR 5. THESE MEASURES INCLUDED:
A) RELOCATING SOME BANKS, B) IMPROVING SECURITY AND ALARM SYSTEMS, C) REVISING BANKING HOURS, D) GROUPING BANKING OFFICES FOR EASIER PROTECTION AND E.) EMPLOYING MORE RIGOROUS STANDARDS IN HIRING BANK EMPLOYEES.

4. THE MAJOR GUERRILLA ACTIVITY IN RECENT WEEKS WAS AN ATTACK ON MARCH 1 BY 40 MEMBERS OF THE FARC ON THE TOWN OF FLORIAN IN SOUTH-WESTERN SANTANDER. THE GUERRILLAS ATTACKED THE POLICE BARRACKS WITH MACHINE GUNS AND HAND GRENADES AND SACKED THE LOCAL CAJA AGRARIA (AGRARIANBANK). THREE GUERRILLAS AND FOUR POLICE WERE WOUNDED AS A RESULT OF THE ATTACK.

5. SMALL SCALE CLASHES WITH GUERRILLA GROUPS RESULTED IN VARIOUS GUERRILLA DEATHS INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING: A) EPL MEMBER PABLO BEDOYA ON FEB 22 IN EL ERIZAL ON THE ANTIOQUIA- CORDOBA BORDER. BEDOYA IS REPORTED BY THE PRESS TO HAVE BEEN THE EPL SECOND- IN- COMMAND. B) ELN MEMBER CAMILO JARAMILLO JARAMILLO (ALIAS NARIZ TORCIDA OR DAVID), ALLEGED TO HAVE LED THE ATTACK ON SAN PEDRO DE URABA ON JAN 26 WHICH RESULTED IN FIVE POLICE DEATHS, IN ZABAleta, DEPT OF ANTIOQUIA.

6. KIDNAPPING CONTINUED TO RECEIVE EXTENSIVE PRESS COVERAGE. AN ANTIOQUIAN RANCHER, GUSTAVO ESCOBAR ESCOBAR WAS KIDNAPPED ON FEBRUARY 22 IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF VALPARAISO ABOUT 150 KM SOUTHWEST OF MEDELLIN. HOWEVER, POLICE AGENTS FOUND AND RELEASED ESCOBAR ON MAR 2 WHEN THEY RAIDED A HOUSE IN THE SOUTHERN PART OF MEDELLIN.

7. ANOTHER ANTIOQUIAN RANCHER WAS REPORTED KIDNAPPED ON MAR 12
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FROM HIS RANCH A FEW KILOMETERS FROM REMEDIO IN THE DEPT OF

ANTIOQUIA. THE RANCHER, EUGENIO MESA CARVAJAL IS REPORTEDLY BEING HELD FOR PESOS 200,000 RANSOM.

8. THE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL POLICE, IN A RADIO INTERVIEW ON FEBRUARY 27, EMPHASIZED THAT THE POLICE WOULD USE THE MOST MODERN COMMUNICATIONS AND TRANSPORTATION EQUIPMENT IN THE BATTLE AGAINST LAW

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ESSNESS. HE ALSO ALLUDED TO THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CAUSES OF CRIME, EMPHASIZED IT WAS NOT TRUE THAT THE POLICE WERE INCAPABLE OF CONTROLLING THE PRESENT CRIME WAVE, AND POINTED OUT THAT NOWHERE IN

THE WORLD HAS CRIME BEEN COMPLETELY ERADICATED.

9. IN A MOVE DESIGNED TO UNDERLINE GOVT ANTI- GUERRILLA CAPABILITIES, THE PRES OF THE REPUBLIC ATTENDED A THREE HOUR EXERCISE BY THE SPECIAL FORCES ANTI- GUER- RILLA UNIT OF THE ARMY IN MELGAR. THE DEMONSTRATION CONSISTED OF COMMUNICATIONS, TRANSPORTATION AND TACTICAL EXERCISES.

10. WHILE GOVT SECURITY SECURITY FORCES HAVE HAD SOME NOTABLE SUCCESS IN RECENT WEEKS IN KILLING GUERRILLAN SEIZING ARMS AND MUNITIONS AND RECOVERING ONE KIDNAP VICTIM, NEVERTHELESS, THE WAVE OF BANK ROBBERIES, KIDNAPPINGS AND OTHER CRIMES AS WELL GUERRILLA ENGAGEMENTS CONTINUE TO RECEIVE EXTENSIVE PRESS COVERAGE AND TO CAUSE CONCERN TO THE GOVT AND TO THE PUBLIC AT LARGE.

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